

Prayers, Donations Urgently Needed

Indian Mission Director Pleads for Help

Special to The Catholic Courier

THOREAU, NM - As Catholics anticipate the holy season of Advent and Christmas, the director, priest, sisters, lay missionaries and staff of a New Mexico Mission school are concerned about urgently-needed help. They work daily to make quality Catholic education a reality for American Indian children in their care.

Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Academy was started more than a decade ago by St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School Founder Very Rev. Douglas A. McNeill when he realized the Indian children in the Mission's CCD classes didn't have even the most basic reading and writing skills. Today over 300 children, most of them Native American, pray to keep their school from closing.

The Indian boys and girls attending Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Academy live with the following

realities:

- 55% of the Navajo population cannot read or write;
- McKinley County (where the Mission is located) has the highest poverty rate (43%) in the state;
- The suicide rate among Navajo teenagers is ten times higher than for their age group in the U.S. population at large.

A nearly 40-member strong corps of dedicated lay missionaries teach and carry out the other work of the Mission. This "other work" includes maintaining the buses and vans which travel the remote mesas to bring the children to school; preparing two nourishing meals daily for the children; and bringing both food and water to aging Navajos

living in poverty in remote areas of the barren Reservation.

New lay missionaries often ask, "Can this be America?"

For many of our students, Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Academy is their "last hope." They've experienced failure in other schools or inability to get to school from great distances.

Trusting in God, everyone at the Mission prays for urgently-needed help. We added two classrooms this fall so have the increased expense of two more teachers and aides, plus materials for those classrooms and supplies for the children. Will you help us?

Gifts made to St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School are tax-deductible. The school also qualifies for "Matching Gifts."



St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School



Amber

A Super School!

Last year when I was in the fourth grade, I came to Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Academy. My big brother came here in 1992 that's why I came here. These teachers are kind and I like them alot. This school has a church, an outdoor gym, a computer and major class. My friends and I play everyday. Now I don't have to come here I would have been with friends who would be showing me around. What makes BHIA a great school are nice cooks, caring bus drivers, friendly teachers, a helpful principal, and caring benefactors.

Dear Catholic Courier Readers,

I'm turning to you for help. I pray you will join me in a partnership of prayer, love and concern.

My concern is for the children at St. Bonaventure Mission School. Without caring friends like you we can't exist.

Many of the over 300 children coming to us from the eastern Navajo Reservation live in near Third-World conditions—some have no electricity or running water; despair bred by poverty; and poverty of spirit due to neglect, dysfunctional family life and alcoholism. In our school we provide education which gives hope for the future to these children, two meals a day, and a nurturing environment.

Our needs are great. I pray you will join in our love for these children through your financial help and your prayers.

In Christ's Love,

Bob O'Connell

Bob O'Connell, Director
St. Bonaventure Indian Mission & School

Clip and Mail Today

Here's my gift of love of \$ _____

Please pray for my special intentions _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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- () Please check here if you would like to receive a beautiful rosary hand-strung with reconstituted turquoise nuggets and silver-plated beads as a token of appreciation for your gift of \$100 or more.
- () Please check here if you would like to receive an autographed hardbound copy of Tony Hillerman's book, Sacred Clowns, which is dedicated to the lay missionaries serving at St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School, as a token of appreciation for your gift of \$50 or more.
- () Please check here if you would like to receive a sterling silver cross, set with turquoise, made by our local Indian artisans, as a token of appreciation for your gift of \$35 or more. It is a unique piece of jewelry you will wear—or give—with pride.



Send to:

Help from Catholic Courier Readers
St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School
Eastern Navajo Reservation, P.O. Box 610, Thoreau, NM 87323-0610